

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

UNCLAS USBERLIN 2186

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, WB
SUBJECT: VON WEIZSAECKER REPLACES LORENZ AS CDU GOVMAYOR CANDIDATE

REF: USBERLIN 2166 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: BERLIN'S CDU PARTY PRESIDUM UNANIMOUSLY AGREED
SEPTEMBER 9 TO NAME RICHARD VON WEIZSAECKER AS THE PARTY'S
GOVERNING MAYOR CANDIDATE REPLACING PETER LORENZ. PRESS
AND EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE DECISION HAS BEEN UNUSALLY
HEAVY AND ALMOST UNIVERSALLY POSITIVE. APD AND FDP LEADERS
HAVE GRUDGINGLY AGREED THAT CDU HAS PICKED A GOOD MAN TO
LEAD ITS TICKET, BUT HAVE SOUGHT TO CHARACTERIZE THE DECISION
AS REFLECTING FAILURE OF PAST CDU POLICIES AND LEADERSHIP.
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END SUMMARY.

1. AS INDICATED REFTTEL, BERLIN'S PRESIDUM MET IN EXTRA-
ORDINARY SESSION SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, AND UNANIMOUSLY
NOMINATED CDU BUNDESTAG DEPUTY RICHARD VON WEIZSAECKER AS
ITS CANDIDATE FOR BERLIN GOVERNING MAYOR. THE
DECISION TO NAME VON WEIZSAECKER TO REPLACE PETER LORENZ,

WHO WILL REMAIN CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN, WAS UNANIMOUS.

2. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS, LORENZ HIMSELF REVEALED THAT HE HAD APPROACHED VON WEIZSAECKER SEVERAL MONTHS AGO AND HAD ALSO PROPOSED THE CHANGE TO CDU NATIONAL CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL.

3. VON WEIZSAECKER DID NOT MAKE A LENGTHY PRESENTATION AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, RESTRICTING HIMSELF TO A FEW BRIEF REMARKS IN WHICH HE SAID HE HOPED TO CONDUCT A CAMPAIGN AND A POLICY WHICH WOULD FOCUS ATTENTION ON BERLIN AS BEING A "NATIONAL TAKS" FOR GERMANY. HE DECLINED TO GO INTO DETAILS ABOUT HOW HE WILL CONDUCT HIS CAMPAIGN, WHO HE MIGHT BRING TO BERLIN WITH HIM, OR WHETHER HE COULD CONSIDER A COALITION WITH THE FDP.

4. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE, VON WEIZSAECKER RETURNED TO BONN AND LORENZ LEFT FOR A PLANNED WEEK'S VISIT IN THE U.S.

5. PRESS REPORTING OF THE CDU DECISION HAS BEEN UNUSUALLY HEAVY, WITH ALL PAPERS GIVING FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE FOR AT LEAST TWO DAYS. THERE HAVE ALOS BEEN NUMEROUS BIOGRAPHIC PROFILES AND BACKGROUND ARTICLES ON VON WEIZSAECKER AS A PERSON AND POLITICIAN. EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY FAVORABLE TO THE BERLIN CDU'S DECISION TO PUT A UNCLASSIFIED

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MAN OF VON WEIZSAECKER'S STATURE AT THE TOP OF THEIR PARTY. THERE WAS BASIC AGREEMENT AMONG PRESS COMMENTARIES THAT VON WEIZSAECKER'S CANDIDACY MEANS THAT GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE WILL HAVE HIS WORK CUT OUT FOR HIM FOR THE NEXT HALF YEAR.

6. INITIAL REACTION OF THE FDP (LUEDER) AND THE SPD (SOETJE AND LOEFFLER) WAS THAT THE CDU HAD DONE A SERVICE TO THE CITY IN SELECTING VON WEIZSAECKER AS THEIR CANDIDATE. AT THE SAME TIME BOTH PARTIES SOUGHT TO DEPICT THE CDU DECISION TO CHANGE THEIR TOP CANDIDATE THIS CLOSE TO THE ELECTION AS A CLEAR ADMISSION BY THE BERLIN CDU THAT ITS LEADERS AND ITS POLICIES HAVE BEEN FAILURES.

7. GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE WAS REPORTED BY DER ABEND AS PRAISING THE STATURE OF HIS NEW OPPONENT. ABEND ALSO REPORTS THAT STOBBE AND SPD LEADERS ARE IN FULL AGREEMENT THAT NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT AS A RESULT. ABEND EVEN SUGGESTS THAT IT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR STOBBE TO ABANDON HIS PREVIOUS ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF WORKING TO GAIN THE RE-ELECTION OF THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION AND DECIDE TO GO ALL OUT IN AN EFFORT TO GAIN THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR THE SPD

BY ITSELF. ANDERSON

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